



**Testimony of Luis B. Perez President/CEO of MHAC
In Support of SB-417: An Act Concerning The Provision Of Psychiatric And
Substance Use Treatment Services
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Good Morning Senator Gerratana, and Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Luis B. Perez LCSW. I am the President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of Connecticut, Inc. an organization dedicated to working and advocating for everyone's mental health for over 106 years. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of S.B. -417: An Act Concerning The Provision Of Psychiatric And Substance Use Treatment Services.

- 1. SB-417 promotes the integration of behavioral health and primary care by allowing community based behavioral health providers to provide psychiatric and substance use disorder treatment services in primary and other health care settings.**
- 2. Current DPH licensure regulations restrict clinic practice to physical locations specifically approved by the department. There is no provision - short of full licensing of a new site - for the deployment of clinical resources from a licensed clinic to an "off-site" location.**

3. Integration through co-location provides improved care for individuals with co-occurring physical and behavioral health conditions, resulting in better outcomes.

Psychotropic medications for conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are more commonly prescribed by primary care physicians than psychiatrists. We must support primary care physicians by providing them access to behavioral health specialists that can safely and effectively treat patients and to make appropriate referrals

4. Integration breaks down silos and promotes a whole-person approach to wellness and health. The collaborative model, in which behavioral health services are provided in the primary care setting, has been shown to reap measurable benefits in both patient outcomes and long-term cost savings, by reducing avoidable hospitalization. These principles are in line with the ACA and current health initiatives being undertaken by the state, including behavioral health homes, the state innovation model, and health neighborhoods demonstration project.

Thank you.